

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1           1.     A method of crediting an account of a network access  
2     node, comprising:  
3                 receiving a data signal at the network access node;  
4                 forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a network user  
5     node; and  
6                 providing account crediting information to an  
7     accounting system, wherein the account crediting information  
8     represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the  
9     network access node.
- 1           2.     The method of claim 1, wherein the network access  
2     node is a repeater.
- 1           3.     The method of claim 2, wherein the network access  
2     node is further part of an ad hoc network.
- 1           4.     The method of claim 1, wherein the network access  
2     node is an access point.
- 1           5.     The method of claim 4, wherein the data signal is  
2     received from a public telephone.
- 1           6.     The method of claim 1, further comprising providing  
2     account debiting information to the accounting system, wherein the  
3     account debiting information represents a debit to be recorded for an  
4     account associated with the network user node.

1           7.     The method of claim 1, further comprising providing  
2     second account crediting information to the accounting system,  
3     wherein the second account crediting information represents a  
4     second credit to be recorded to an account associated with the  
5     Internet service provider and the data signal is provided by an  
6     Internet service provider.

1           8.     The method of claim 1, wherein the network user node  
2     is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1           9.     The method of claim 1, wherein the credit is based on  
2     the forwarded data signal.

1           10.    The method of claim 9, wherein the credit is based on  
2     at least one of the time of day and airtime usage of the data signal.

1           11.    The method of claim 9, wherein the credit is calculated  
2     on at least one of a per-packet basis and a flat rate basis.

1           12.    The method of claim 1, wherein the step of forwarding  
2     includes transmitting the data signal using a wireless local area  
3     network (WLAN) protocol.

1           13.    The method of claim 12, wherein the WLAN protocol is  
2     the IEEE 802.11 protocol.

1           14.   A portable device configured as a repeater, comprising:  
2                   means for receiving a data signal wirelessly;  
3                   means for forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a  
4 network user node; and  
5                   means for providing account crediting information to an  
6 accounting system, wherein the account crediting information  
7 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the  
8 portable device.

1           15.   The portable device of claim 14, wherein the portable  
2 device is configured to operate in an ad hoc network.

1           16.   The portable device of claim 14, further comprising  
2 means for providing account debiting information to the accounting  
3 system, wherein the account debiting information represents a debit  
4 to be recorded for an account associated with the network user  
5 node.

1           17.   The portable device of claim 14, further comprising  
2 means for providing second account crediting information to the  
3 accounting system, wherein the data signal is provided by an  
4 Internet service provider, wherein the second account crediting  
5 information represents a second credit to be recorded to an account  
6 associated with an Internet service provider.

1           18.   The portable device of claim 14, wherein the credit is  
2 based on the forwarded data signal.

1           19.   The portable device of claim 18, wherein the credit is  
2 based on airtime usage of the data signal.

1           20.    The portable device of claim 18, wherein the credit is  
2    calculated on a per-packet basis of the data signal.

1           21.    The portable device of claim 14, wherein the means for  
2    forwarding includes a wireless local area network (WLAN)  
3    transmitter.

1           22.    The portable device of claim 21, wherein the network  
2    user node is a portable device.

1           23.    An accounting method for crediting an account  
2 associated with a network access node, comprising:  
3                receiving a communication event message, wherein the  
4 communication event message includes identification data  
5 representing a network access node, wherein the communication  
6 event message is received in response to the network access node  
7 receiving and forwarding a data signal on behalf of a network user  
8 node; and  
9                crediting an account associated with the network  
10 access node based on the communication event message.

1           24.    The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message further includes the number of  
3 packets in the forwarded data signal.

1           25.    The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message further includes the duration of a  
3 communication between the network access node and the network  
4 user node.

1           26.    The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message is received in response to the  
3 network access node repeating the data signal in an ad hoc network.

1           27.    The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message is received in response to the  
3 network access node acting as an access point.

1           28.    The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message includes second identification data

3 representing the network user node, further comprising debiting an  
4 account associated with the network user node.

1 29. The accounting method of claim 23, further comprising  
2 crediting an account associated with an Internet service provider,  
3 wherein the data signal is provided by the Internet service provider,  
4 wherein the communication event message includes third  
5 identification data representing the Internet service provider.

1 30. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 network access node receives and forwards the data signal via a  
3 wireless local area network (WLAN) protocol.

1           31. A method of crediting an account associated with an  
2 access point, comprising:  
3               receiving a data signal at the access point;  
4               forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a network user  
5 node using a wireless local area network (WLAN) communication  
6 standard; and  
7               providing account crediting information to an  
8 accounting system, wherein the account crediting information  
9 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the  
10 access point.

1           32. The method of claim 31, wherein the data signal is  
2 received from a public telephone.

1           33. The method of claim 31, wherein the data signal is  
2 received from the Internet.

1           34. The method of claim 31, further comprising providing  
2 account debiting information to the accounting system, wherein the  
3 account debiting information represents a debit to be recorded for an  
4 account associated with the network user node.

1           35. The method of claim 31, further comprising providing  
2 second account crediting information to the accounting system,  
3 wherein the data signal is provided by a data source, wherein the  
4 second account crediting information represents a second credit to  
5 be recorded to an account associated with the data source.

1           36. The method of claim 31, wherein the network user  
2 node is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1           37.    The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is based on  
2   the forwarded data signal.

1           38.    The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is based on  
2   airtime usage of the data signal.

1           39.    The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is  
2   calculated on a per-packet basis.

1           40.    The method of claim 31, wherein the wireless local area  
2   network protocol is the IEEE 802.11 protocol.

1           41.   An access point, comprising:  
2                   a receive circuit configured to receive a data signal;  
3                   a transmit circuit configured to transmit the data signal  
4 over a wireless local area network (WLAN) to a network user node;  
5 and  
6                   an accounting circuit configured to provide account  
7 crediting information, wherein the account crediting information  
8 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the  
9 access point.

1           42.   The access point of claim 41, wherein the receive  
2 circuit is coupled to a public switched telephone network.

1           43.   The access point of claim 42, wherein the data signal is  
2 received from an Internet service provider.

1           44.   The access point of claim 43, wherein the account  
2 crediting information represents a credit to be recorded for an  
3 account associated with the Internet service provider.

1           45.   The access point of claim 41, wherein the wireless local  
2 area network operates according to the IEEE 802.11 standard.

1           46.   The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is  
2 based on the transmitted data signal.

1           47.   The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is  
2 based on airtime usage of the data signal.

1           48.   The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is  
2 calculated on a per-packet basis.

1           49.    The access point of claim 41, wherein the accounting  
2    circuit is further configured to provide account debiting information,  
3    wherein the account debiting information represents a debit to be  
4    recorded for an account associated with the network user node.

1           50. A system for crediting an account associated with a  
2 network access node, comprising:  
3                 a network access node configured to provide a  
4 communication link with a network;  
5                 a network user node configured to provide a wireless  
6 communication link with the network access node; and  
7                 an accounting system configured to credit an account  
8 associated with the network access node based on a communication  
9 between the network user node and the network.

1           51. The system of claim 50, wherein the network access  
2 node is a repeater configured to provide a wireless communication  
3 link with an access point coupled to the network.

1           52. The system of claim 50, wherein the network access  
2 node is an access point coupled to a network, wherein the network  
3 includes a public switched telephone network.

1           53. The system of claim 50, wherein the accounting system  
2 is further configured to debit an account associated with the remote  
3 node based on the communication between the network user node  
4 and the network.

1           54. The system of claim 50, wherein the network user node  
2 is a portable handheld device having a display.

1           55. A wireless communication module for a public  
2 telephone coupled to a public switched telephone network,  
3 comprising a wireless local area network (WLAN) transceiver circuit  
4 configured to provide a wireless communication link between the  
5 public switched telephone network and a network user node.

1           56. The wireless communication module of claim 55,  
2 further comprising a tamper-resistant casing surrounding the  
3 transceiver circuit.

1           57. The wireless communication module of claim 55,  
2 further comprising a digital subscriber line (DSL) circuit configured to  
3 communicate between the public switched telephone network and  
4 the transceiver circuit.

1           58. The wireless communication module of claim 57,  
2 wherein the transceiver circuit is configured to communicate with  
3 the network user node pursuant to the IEEE 802.11 standard.

1           59. A method of adjusting at least one of an account of a  
2 first person associated with a network access node and an account  
3 of a second person associated with a network user node,  
4 comprising:  
5                 receiving a data signal at the network access node;  
6                 forwarding the data signal wirelessly to the network  
7 user node; and  
8                 providing account adjustment information to an  
9 accounting system, wherein the account adjustment information  
10 represents at least one of a credit to be recorded to the first person's  
11 account and a debit to be recorded to the second person's account.

1           60. The method of claim 59, wherein the network access  
2 node is a repeater.

1           61. The method of claim 60, wherein the network access  
2 node is further part of an ad hoc network.

1           62. The method of claim 59, wherein the network access  
2 node is an access point.

1           63. The method of claim 59, wherein the account  
2 information represents a credit to be recorded to the first person's  
3 account.

1           64. The method of claim 59, wherein the account  
2 information represents a debit to be recorded to the second person's  
3 account.

1           65.    The method of claim 59, further comprising providing  
2   second account information to the accounting system, wherein the  
3   second account information represents a second credit to be  
4   recorded to an account associated with the Internet service provider  
5   and the data signal is provided by an Internet service provider.

1           66.    The method of claim 59, wherein the network user  
2   node is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1           67.    The method of claim 59, wherein the credit is based on  
2   the forwarded data signal.

1           68.    The method of claim 59, wherein the step of forwarding  
2   includes transmitting the data signal using a wireless local area  
3   network (WLAN) protocol.

1           69.    The method of claim 68, wherein the WLAN protocol is  
2   the IEEE 802.11 protocol